

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0067

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (SEELYE, TALCOTT W.)
SUBJ: NEGATIVE INITIAL REACTION TO VISIT BY DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY SEELYE

REFS: A) MOGADISCIO 0021; B) STATE 006164

SUMMARY: UPON RECEIPT OF AN EMBASSY NOTE VERBALE REPORTING DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY SEELYE'S PROPOSED VISIT TO MOGADISCIO AND
REQUESTING
APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL CONTACTS FOR HIM, SOMALI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL

CONVOKED THE CHARGE TO SAY THAT SUCH VISITS WERE NEITHER USEFUL NOR
WELCOME. CHARGE'S FRANK EXPLANATION OF POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF GSDR'S

REFUSAL TO RECEIVE VISITORS SUCH AS THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
CAUSED OFFICIAL TO BACKTRACK, AND LATER PROMISED TO CONSULT HIS
PRINCIPALS AND GET BACK IN TOUCH WITH CHARGE. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY NOTE VERBALE JANUARY 10 INFORMED GSDR THAT DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY SEELYE HAD MADE TENTATIVE PLANS TO VISIT MOGADISCIO

AND REQUESTED THAT HE, "AS A SENIOR OFFICIAL ACTIVE IN THE FORMULATION

OF UNITED STATES POLICY IN AFRICA," BE RECEIVED "BY REPRESENTATIVES OF
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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AT APPROPRIATE
LEVELS...".

2. DIRECTOR OF EUROPEAN/AMERICAN AFFAIRS IN FOREIGN MINISTRY (HASSAN
KAID ABDILLAH) SUMMONED CHARGE JANUARY 12 TO SAY THAT MINISTRY
OFFICIALS HAD CONSIDERED NOTE VERBALE AND CONCLUDED THAT SUCH

VISITS WERE NOT USEFUL. ALTHOUGH MINISTRY WANTED HEAR MORE ABOUT THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S PURPOSES IN VISITING MOGADISCIO, AS GENERAL RULE IT SAW NO POINT TO VISITS BY RELATIVELY "JUNIOR" OFFICIALS WHO LACK AUTHORITY TO MAKE DECISIONS. MOREOVER, SUCH VISITORS CAN DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD. WILLIAM E. RICHARDSON, STAFF MEMBER, SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, WAS CASE IN POINT. RICHARDSON'S BLUNT QUESTIONS ABOUT GSDR'S LINKS WITH USSR AND ITS DESIRE FOR US AID HAD OFFENDED DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, DR. ABDURAHMAN JAMA BARRE. IN OPINION OF MINISTRY, ONLY A VISIT BY "HIGH-LEVEL" US DELEGATION, AUTHORIZED TO "THRASH OUT" OBSTACLES TO IMPROVED US-SOMALI RELATIONS, COULD DO ANY GOOD AT THIS POINT.

3. CHARGE EXPLAINED THAT THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S PRIMARY PURPOSE IN MAKING VISIT WAS "ORIENTATION" BUT THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS BILATERAL ISSUES RAISED BY GSDR. CHARGE SAID HE TOOK EXTREMELY SERIOUS VIEW OF NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD SUCH VISITS. IF GSDR HAD NO INTEREST IN TALKING TO US OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY OFFICIALS WELL-PLACED TO INFLUENCE VIEWS OF NEW ADMINISTRATION, THERE WOULD APPEAR TO BE NO BASIS ON WHICH TO REVIVE US-SOMALI DIALOGUE. CHARGE REMINDED HASSAN THAT GSDR MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE EMBASSY TO COMMUNICATE WITH SOMALI OFFICIALS AND PEOPLE. THEREFORE, VISITS BY SUCH PEOPLE AS SEELYE AND RICHARDSON COULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL.

4. CHARGE SAID USG CONTINUED TO HOPE FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH GSDR. REALISTICALLY, HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO WAY TO SWEEP AWAY PAST MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND DISAGREEMENTS. USG LOOKED ON CONTACTS
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AFFORDED BY THESE VISITS AS A WAY OF WARMING UP BILATERAL ATMOSPHERE, IMPROVING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND, IF CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT, SETTING STAGE FOR FURTHER CONTACTS AND COOPERATION. GSDR'S REACTION TO VISITS, THEREFORE, WAS REVEALING OF SENSE OF URGENCY WITH WHICH IT LOOKED UPON IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS. IF MINISTRY DISCOURAGED CONTACTS OUT OF HAND, CHARGE SAID HE COULD NOT IN GOOD CONSCIENCE REPORT TO USG THAT CONDITIONS WERE CONDUCIVE TO IMPROVEMENT IN US-SOMALI RELATIONS. HE ASKED HASSAN WHETHER HE SHOULD REPORT THE ABOVE AS A FIXED GSDR POSITION.

5. HASSAN, SOMEWHAT TAKEN ABACK BY CHARGE'S EXPLANATION OF POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES, SAID, "NO", AND ASKED CHARGE TO VIEW CONVERSATION AS MERELY EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. HE SAID HIS DIRECTOR GENERAL HAD NOT DISCUSSED NOTE VERBALE WITH ANYONE OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY AND HE HOPED TO HAVE CHANCE TO CONSULT WITH HIS PRINCIPALS BEFORE OFFICIAL POSITIONS WERE TAKEN ON EITHER SIDE. HASSAN PROMISED TO GET BACK IN TOUCH WITH CHARGE.

6. COMMENT: CHARGE GAINED IMPRESSION FROM HASSAN'S PRESENTATION

THAT NEGATIVE REACTION TO SEELYE VISIT EMANATED LARGELY, IF NOT ENTIRELY, FROM DR. ABDURAHMAN. WE HAVE SEEN ABDURAHMAN SHOOT FROM HIP ON OTHER OCCASIONS. INDEED, WE BELIEVE HIS HOSTILITY TO US IS A DIRECT CAUSE OF MANY OF THE PINPRICKS FROM WHICH THIS MISSION SUFFERS. HOW MUCH OF THIS IS REFLECTION OF ABDURAHMAN'S PERSONALITY AND HOW MUCH GSDR POLICY IS MATTER OF CONJECTURE. CONCEIVABLY, ABDURAHMAN MAY RECONSIDER HIS INITIAL ATTITUDE TO SEELYE VISIT AFTER TALKING AGAIN WITH HASSAN, BUT THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT. IF HE DOES NOT RECONSIDER, EMBASSY STRONGLY URGES THAT AMBASSADOR ADDOU BE CALLED IN TO EXPLAIN PRACTICE WHICH, IF IMPLEMENTED SYSTEMATICALLY, WOULD CUT OFF ONE OF FEW REMAINING AVENUES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN USG AND GSDR. FINALLY, EMBASSY HOPES DEPUTY ASSISTANT SEELYE WILL INCLUDE MOGADISCIO IN HIS ITINERARY REGARDLESS OF HIS RECEPTION BY GSDR. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN-HOUSE DISCUSSIONS WILL BE USEFUL. JACOBS

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